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ABSTRACT

Noting that whole language proponents suggest integration of two or more subject areas around a common theme using literature, this paper presents annotations of 31 items from the ERIC database on thematic units of study. Annotations in the paper are organized into six sections--overview, elementary examples, research, secondary examples, special learners, and other related examples. The paper includes annotations of ERIC documents and journal articles published between 1986 and 1992. (RS)

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Using Thematic Units with Elementary and Secondary Students

by *Jerry Johns and Cindy L. Olsen*

Traditionally, the content areas such as math and science were taught as separate entities. Recently, whole language proponents have suggested integration of two or more subject areas around a common theme using literature. This is known as a thematic approach. Using thematic units of study teaches students of all age and ability levels that learning is meaningful and relevant to everyday life.

This Bibliography considers six areas related to thematic units: (1) overview, (2) elementary examples, (3) research, (4) secondary examples, (5) special learners, and (6) other related examples.

The citations are from the period 1986-1992 and are of two types: ERIC documents and journal articles.

Overview

AN: ED346499
AU: Montgomery, Paula Kay
TI: Approaches to Literature Through Theme. The Oryx Reading Motivation Series No. 1.
PY: 1992
AB: Provides literature theme approaches and teaching strategies for reading and teaching literature.
AV: Oryx Press, 4041 North Central at Indian School Road, Phoenix, AZ 85012 ($29.50).

AN: ED336730
AU: Clemmons, Joan; And Others
TI: Engaging the Learner in Whole Language: An Immersion Approach.
PY: 1991; Workshop presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (36th, Las Vegas, NV, May 6-10, 1991).
AB: Describes a collection of administrative planning and teaching materials focusing on an immersion approach to engaging learners in whole literacy.

AN: ED325840
AU: Henney, Maribeth
TI: Literature-Based Theme Units.
PY: 1990; Paper presented at the World Congress on Reading (13th, Stockholm, Sweden, July 3-6, 1990).
AB: Suggests that literature-based units are a way to immerse children in reading and enable them to use this reading in interesting, meaningful, relevant activities.

CS214755

AN: ED315775
AU: Pappas, Christina C.; And Others
TI: An Integrated Language Perspective in the Elementary School: Theory Into Action

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PY: 1990
AB: Outlines the integrated language perspective on teaching in the elementary school. Provides the theory on which the perspective is based and many examples of how to translate it into practice.
AV: Order Dept., Addison-Wesley-Longman, Jacob Way, Reading, MA 01867 ($29.95).

Elementary Examples

AN: EJ448341
AU: Drum, Yvonne
TI: King Tut Revisited.
PY: 1992
JN: *Ohio Reading Teacher*; v26 n4 p25-28 Sum 1992
AB: Describes an instructional unit on ancient Egypt that incorporates many content areas.

AN: ED340012
AU: Hoberg, Rosemary; Plante, Donna
TI: Learning About Frogs: An Integrated Curricular Unit.
PY: 1992
JN: *Insights into Open Education*; v24 n 5 Jan-Feb 1992
AB: Describes an integrated curricular unit on frogs, developed for the second grade, that focuses primarily on integrating reading, writing, and science.

AB: ED355469
AU: Raines, Shirley C.; Canady, Robert J.
TI: Story stretchers for the Primary Grades: Activities to Expand Children's Favorite Books.
PY: 1992
AB: Describes a literature-inspired curriculum for grades 1-3 organized around thematic units. Uses the concept of story stretchers to connect children's books to other subject areas.
AV: Gryphon House, Inc., 3706 Otis St., Mt. Rainier, MD 20712 ($14.95 plus $2.50 postage/handling).

AN: EJ438575
AU: Zaidel, Lisa Brusman
TI: The Theme's The Thing.
PY: 1991
JN: *Learning*; v20 n3 p60-63 Oct 1991
AB: Presents suggestions to help elementary teachers organize learning centers and activities around three themes, for grades 1, 3, and 5, in several content areas.

AN: ED314718
AU: Hewitt, Amelia M.; Roos, Marie C.
TI: Thematic-Based Literature throughout the Curriculum.
PY: 1990

AB: Describes practical activities for incorporating children's literature and thematic activities in the curriculum to stimulate children's thinking and language.

AN: ED328366
AU: Leigh, Cindy; And Others
TI: Primary Guide for Instructional Planning.
PY: 1990
AB: Describes Mississippi's guide for instructional planning for the primary grades. Includes six units, research principles incorporated, recommended books, and teacher resources.

AN: EJ410151
AU: Smit, Edna K.
TI: Teaching Theme to Elementary Students (In the Classroom).
PY: 1990
JN: *The Reading Teacher*; v43 n9 p699-701 May 1990
AB: Shares two methods for teaching themes (giving and jealously are used as examples) to elementary students.

AN: ED316867
AU: Vivian, Diane M.
TI: A Thematic Literary Unit: Using Literature Across The Curriculum in a Elementary Classroom.
PY: 1990
JN: *Insights into Open Education*; v22 n7 April 1988
AB: Describes "Think Big," a thematic literary unit using literature about elephants in a holistic way and attempting to cross the curriculum into the content areas of science and math.

AN: ED298479
AU: Whyte, Sarah
TI: Whole Language Using Big Books.
PY: 1988
AB: Demonstrates using Wright Company Big Books in thematic units in a first grade program.

Research

AN: ED349540
AU: Erwin, Barbara
TI: The Effect of Culturally Related Schemata and Instruction Using Thematic Units on Comprehension.
PY: 1992; Paper presented at the World Congress on Reading (14th, Maui, HI, July 13-16, 1992)
AB: Describes a study addressing the relationship of culturally related schema to comprehension and examines the effect of instruction using thematic units upon the

development of background knowledge. Results indicate that the use of thematic units as a method for improving comprehension was a viable strategy within certain parameters.

AN: ED348645
AU: King, Caryn M.
TI: Creating a Literate Environment for Learning Social Studies Content.
PY: 1992; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (37th, Orlando, FL, May 3-8, 1992.
AB: Describes a study that examined the extent to which literacy tasks were emphasized within a fourth-grade social studies classroom. Findings suggest that language was viewed as an integral part of the learning process in this classroom.

AN: ED340042
AU: Rosaen, Cheryl L.; Cantlon, Danise J.
TI: Coherence in Literature-Based Thematic Units. Elementary Subjects Center Series No. 53.
PY: 1991
AB: Describes a study conducted to analyze and compare two elementary literature-based thematic curricular units. Results indicated that teachers need to choose resources for literature-based units well and consider seriously the power of the theme for developing literary understanding and appreciation.

Secondary Examples

AN: ED339066
AU: Ballan, Francine; And Others
TI: Multicultural Communication Arts, Grades 7 & 8.
PY: 1991
AB: Describes a seventh- and eighth-grade unit designed to challenge students to think critically and to motivate them to relate their own personal experiences to a broader panorama of society. Contains specific goals of the units.
AV: Instructional Publications Unit, New York City Public Schools, 131 Livington St., Brooklyn, NY 11201 ($15.00).

AN: EJ428552
AU: Swicegood, Philip R.; Parsons, James L.
TI: The Thematic Unit Approach: Content and Process Instruction for Secondary Learning Disabled Students.
PY: 1991
JN: *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*; v6 n2 p112-16 1991
AB: Describes the thematic unit approach to content-area learning and its use for learning-disabled students. Provides guidelines for developing and evaluating thematic units.

AN: EJ405085
AU: Davis, Susan J.
TI: Breaking the Cycle of Failure Through the Thematic Experience Approach.
PY: 1990
JN: *Journal of Reading*; v33 n6 p420-23 Mar 1990
AB: Describes the Thematic Experience Approach, designed to build on positive experiences that enlarge the high school dropout's perspective while building self-esteem, background knowledge, and reading ability. Contains a sample unit dealing with legal rights.

AN: ED327859
AU: Stover, Lois T.
TI: Using Young Adult Literature as Artifact to Gain Insight about the Adolescent Experience in Other Cultures.
PY: 1990
AB: Describes how using young adult literature from other countries in the classroom provides a common ground from which to build the tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity in today's world. Suggests common themes of adolescence and 35 applicable books.

AN: EJ388541
AU: Cooter, Robert B., Jr.; Griffith, Robert
TI: Thematic Units for Middle School: An Honorable Seduction.
PY: 1989
JN: *Journal of Reading*; v32 n8 p676-81 May 1989
AB: Describes the Dublin model, a program which uses thematic units or individualized reading assignments to focus on popular adolescent literature and includes projects that demonstrate students' comprehension of text. Discusses the formulation, implementation, and assessment of this program.

AN: EJ432386
AU: Mitsch, Bernadette Volpe
TI: Reading + Writing = Drama: Integrating Reading/Writing in a Thematic Unit.
PY: 1989
JN: *Ohio Reading Teacher*; v24 n1 43-46 Fall 1989
AB: Describes a collaborative project between instructors in language arts and social studies at the middle school level that produced a joint educational venture that made reading and writing more meaningful, challenging, and exciting for students and teachers.

AN: ED292349
TI: Spanish: Communication and Culture. Culturally Oriented Thematic Units in the Secondary Schools.
PY: 1986
AB: Describes a piloted curriculum guide for the junior and senior high levels in New York City's Spanish second language programs. Includes six units for Spanish levels 1-3.
AV: New York City Board of Education, Curriculum Editorial and Production Unit, Office

of Curriculum Development and Support, Room 613, 131 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

Special Learners

AN: EJ450005
AU: Wiig, Elisabeth H.; And Others
TI: Developing Words and Concepts in the Classroom: A Holistic-Thematic Approach.
PY: 1992
JN: *Intervention in School and Clinic*; v27 n5 p278-85 May 1992
AB: Describes the use of cognitive-linguistic training models and thematic units with adolescents with language-learning disabilities. Semantic categorization and concept formation models were used as the bases of the intervention.

AN: EJ400690
AU: Bolte, Anne L.
TI: Using Themes as the Building Blocks for Learning.
PY: 1989
JN: *Perspectives for Teachers of the Hearing Impaired*; v8 n1 p21-23 Sep-Oct 1989
AB: Outlines the advantages of using themes as the foundation of a language arts program for hearing-impaired students. Includes methods for developing new themes, recycling old themes, having children choose their study materials, and structuring classroom activities as well as a description of an insect theme.

AN: EJ368958
AU: Miller, Eta
TI: A Plot to Teach Students to Recognize Theme.
PY: 1988
JN: *Perspectives for Teachers of the Hearing Impaired*; v6 n3 p2-4 Jan-Feb 1988
AB: Deaf elementary and secondary students were found to be less skilled when reading stories in "elaboration," a process requiring higher-order thinking skills. An approach to teaching these skills is described that compares and contrasts a series of stories sharing a common theme.

Other Related Examples

AN: ED34640
AU: Sandel, Lenore
TI: Exploring the Solar System: A Literature Unit within a Whole Language Context.
PY: 1992
AB: Describes in detail the process of creating a unit on the solar system. Suggests that the literature unit is a useful framework for literature-based instruction which provides a total resource for content area teaching.

AN: EJ422734
AU: Goldbort, Robert C.
TI: Science in Literature: Materials for a Thematic Teaching Approach.
PY: 1991
JN: *English Journal*; v80 n3 p69-73 Mar 1991
AB: Suggests that one way for English teachers to have students explore relationships between literature and science is to have them read and write about fiction with scientific themes. Outlines units that create chances for students to bring together the literary arts and the sciences into one classroom.

AN: ED338478
TI: Wet and Wild Water.
PY: 1990
AB: Describes the uses of the thematic approach to show the integration of subjects and skills to create a context for learning. Describes six aquatic units.

AN: ED333368
AU: Chao, Han Hua; Smith, Carl, Comp.
TI: Expanding Thematic Units beyond the Textbook. Learning Package No. 2.
PY: 1990
AB: Describes a learning package originally designed for the Department of Defense Schools (D8DDS) system for use with teachers who wish to upgrade or expand their teaching skills.

AN: EJ381852
AU: Simmons, John S.
TI: Thematic Units: A Context for Journal Writing.
PY: 1989
JN: *English Journal*; v78 n1 p70-72 Jan 1989
AB: Argues that thematic units may be the best way to avoid the lack of compelling journal writing topics. Argues that themes introduced in a journal writing assignment prior to the study of the text are good preparation for reading. Presents some examples of theme, topics, and accompanying literary works.